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## TWO NOTES ON ADDISON

### I

#### THE TEXT OF ADDISON

Considering the long-continued popularity of Addison's works and the clearly defined influence which they have exerted both at home and abroad, it is surprising that the texts of his writings have not been studied more carefully. According to Spence, Pope made the absurd misstatement that Addison never corrected or improved his poems after they had appeared in print. As a matter of fact, the changes in Addison's texts, both prose and verse, are very considerable and possess a genuine interest and value, for they aid us in ascertaining Addison's thought and his method of composition.

Addison died on June 17, 1719. Shortly before his death, he directed Tickell to collect and publish his writings, giving him for this new edition a dedicatory letter addressed to James Craggs. It is a safe inference that Addison had contemplated issuing his writings in their final form, and that he would have done this, had he lived. Not until October, 1721, was Tickell's edition of the "Works of the Right Honourable Joseph Addison, in Four Volumes, printed for Jacob Tonson," ready for subscribers.<sup>1</sup> There can be no doubt that Tickell did everything in his power to carry out the last wishes of his friend and patron. Evidently the four volumes were not hurried through the press, and in view of Tickell's almost superstitious regard for Addison, it is not probable that he would change the text in any way. We may consider, then, that the many new readings in Tickell's edition represent Addison's final revision of his own work and make this the standard text. By comparing this edition with the first editions of Addison's poems, and with the original sheets and the first collected editions of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, we ascertain the changes Addison made in his writings.

<sup>1</sup> *Post Boy*, London, October 2, 1721.

The two most important poems of Addison are the *Letter from Italy* and the *Campaign*. No changes were made in the text of the *Letter*, for Tickell reprints the poem, line for line, from the first edition, showing with what care Addison had composed the "most exquisite of his poems." With the *Campaign*, the case is quite different. The journalistic side of this poem, if one may employ the phrase, has never been sufficiently recognized. The reports of the battle of Blenheim, and in fact, of the whole campaign, published in the London *Daily Courant*, August to November, 1704, are so closely followed in certain parts of Addison's poem that they could be considered the sources for his couplets. Moreover, the *Campaign*, though dated 1705, was published on December 14, 1704, the very day the Duke of Marlborough, returning from his victories, set foot in London. There seems to be more than a mere coincidence in this, for there are indications that parts of the poem at least were hastily written and sent to press with but little correction. Comparing this first edition with the text published by Tickell, we find that some eighteen passages have been revised. Many of the changes are slight ones; the following are typical of Addison's method of correction.

First edition, 1705, ll. 5, 6:

Accept, great leader, what the Muse indites,  
That in ambitious verse records your fights.

Realizing quite justly that he was claiming altogether too much for his poem, Addison changed this, Tickell's edition, 1721, to

Accept, great leader, what the Muse recites,  
That in ambitious verse attempts your fights.

Speaking of the crushing defeat that Marlborough inflicted on the Elector of Bavaria at the assault of the Schellenberg, Addison writes, in the first edition, ll. 217, 218:

While to console thy doom, th' aspiring Gaul  
Shares thy destruction and adorns thy fall.

Reflecting that the Elector would scarcely be consoled by the destruction of his French allies in whom he depended, Addison



This is bad enough, and Addison's revision can hardly be called a success, for he merely changes the second line of the quotation to "Compelled in crowds," and in place of the final couplet substitutes:

Midst heaps of spears and standards driven around,  
Lie in the Danube's bloody whirl-pools drowned.

It is interesting to notice, in leaving the *Campaign*, that Addison never retouched the fortune-bringing simile of the Angel who "rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm."

It is in the *Spectators* that Addison's method of revision is best shown. There are three editions of these papers to be considered: first, the daily sheets, March 1, 1711 to December 6, 1712, and June 18, to December 20, 1714. We shall call these S 1. Secondly, the first collected edition (S 2) eight volumes, volumes one to seven, 1712-13, volume eight, 1715; and thirdly, Tickell's edition, 1721, which we shall designate S 3. So far as I can ascertain, these three texts have never been collated. In his three-volume edition of the *Spectator* (Routledge, 1883), Professor Henry Morley attempted to collate S 1 and S 2, but the work is very inaccurately done and cannot be relied upon. In his edition of the papers on *Paradise Lost*, Professor Arber collated S 1 and S 2 but not S 3. The following points have been noted in collating the three texts of eighty *Spectator* papers, not taken in regular order but from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the series.

1. Addison sought for graceful, musical expression and he shows in his corrections an unusual regard for euphony. Again and again he makes changes in the text—changes in sentence construction, transposition of words, the substitution of one synonym for another—and these revisions appear inexplicable until the sentence is read aloud. General assertions are always hazardous, yet it seems safe to say that no other prose-writer of his day equaled Addison in this endeavor to please the "nice ear." The hissing of the sibilants, the repetition of the same vowel and consonant sounds, a monotony of cadence, all these faults are avoided by a large number of textual changes, and often the revision that satis-

fies him in S 2 does not please him in S 3, which gives a different reading.

2. So far as the sense of his corrections is concerned, Addison's moderation, his constant desire to tone down or qualify his assertions is most striking. Not merely is he afraid of overstatement, but at times he restricts the most innocent assertion in a manner that is fairly amusing. Numerous examples could be given. In *Spectator*, No. 165, speaking of the French phrases used in the English reports of the battles against the French, he writes that he is so bewildered at the strange words he meets that "I do not know which side has the better of it." In S 2 and S 3 this becomes "I scarce know." He begins his first paper on *Paradise Lost*, No. 267, with the phrase "There is nothing in Nature so irksome as general discourses." Considering this to be too bold a remark, he changes it in S 2 and S 3 to "There is nothing in Nature more irksome than general discourses." In this same paper, in S 1 and S 2 he states that if Milton had opened *Paradise Lost* with the account of the battle of the angels and the creation of the world ("which he cast into the fifth, sixth, and seventh books"), he would have destroyed the unity of the poem. He softens this assertion in S 3 by adding "in my opinion." This is typical of many revisions, for he frequently adds in S 2 and S 3 such a qualifying phrase as "to every impartial judge" or inserts a "perhaps."

3. The papers on which Addison expended the greatest care were his criticisms of *Paradise Lost*. Appearing on successive Saturdays, it seems probable that they were written in no undue haste, and there was ample time to revise them before they were printed in S 1, yet comparing S 3 with S 1 we find that he has changed twenty-two passages in No. 267, twenty in No. 273, and eighteen in No. 285. It is evident that he desired these papers to stand the test of the most searching criticism.

In *Spectator*, No. 470, Addison, in his best mood, ridicules the laborious editors of the Latin poets for their insistence upon offering the reader all the various readings of the most trivial text. The satire is not inapplicable to some modern editors of our English classics, and yet it is hardly useless pedantry to observe how

Addison in his prose proved the truth of Waller's verses, and showed that

faultless writing is the effect of care.  
Our lines reformed, and not composed in haste,  
Polished like marble, would like marble last.

## II

### ADDISON AND THE OLD ENGLISH BALLADS

In Johnson's *Life of Addison* occurs the following passage: "He descended now and then to lower disquisitions and by a serious display of the beauties of *Chevy Chase* exposed himself to the ridicule of Wagstaffe, who bestowed a like pompous character on Tom Thumb." This allusion to Wagstaffe and his parody of Addison's criticism is not adequately explained in any edition of Johnson's *Lives*; indeed, the latest and best one, Birkbeck Hill's, though very fully annotated, passes over these lines without comment and merely gives the full title of the pamphlet on Tom Thumb and refers the reader to Dilke's discussion of its authorship. This matter has much to interest the student of the times both for the light it throws on Addison's criticisms and for the information it yields concerning the attitude of the reading public.

Addison's papers on the ballads, *Spectator*, Nos. 70, 74, and 85, are too well known to be described at length. In the first two numbers he discusses *Chevy Chase*, giving many quotations from it; in the last paper he praises the *Babes in the Wood*. Realizing that his appreciation of these poems would seem absurd and utterly indefensible to the readers of his day, Addison endeavors to justify his admiration by finding in these ballads numerous parallels to the *Aeneid* and *Iliad*. It is needless to say that these parallels were far fetched and consequently offered a good opportunity for parody, as did his attempt to read into the ballads a high moral purpose. To sum up the matter in a phrase, Addison's taste was right but his method of defending his taste was a poor one.

In answer to these papers on the ballads, there appeared a pamphlet published by John Morphew. Consisting of twenty-four pages, it bore the title "*A Comment on the History of Tom*

*Thumb*, price three pence, London, 1711" and omitted any statement of the author's name. Addison's first paper on the ballads, No. 70, appeared May 21, 1711. I have been unable to ascertain the date of publication of the first edition of the *Comment*. There is no mention of it in the *London Daily Courant*, and the *Examiner*, which was published by Morpew and would naturally contain a notice of a pamphlet from his press, has no word concerning it. The *Post Man*, August 16 to 18, 1711, contains the following advertisement: "This day is published on fine Paper A Comment upon the History of Tom Thumb, tha 2d Edition Corrected. Printed for J. Morpew near Stationer's Hall, pr. 3d. N. B. There is a Sham sort printed on bad Paper, full of errors, and contains not above half the other, whereby the Sense of it is very much perverted." Less than three months after Addison's first paper on the ballads, there had appeared two editions of the parody and a third garbled one. Evidently the public was greatly interested in the matter.

Both the first and second editions of the *Comment* were published anonymously, but it was later included in the *Collected Works* of William Wagstaffe, London, 1725. In *Notes and Queries*, 3d S., Vol. I, p. 381; Vol. II, p. 396 (reprinted in *Papers of a Critic*, Vol. I, 369, London, 1875) Sir Charles Dilke advanced a theory, and supported it by some strong arguments, that these writings attributed to Wagstaffe were written in reality by Swift. Especially does the *Comment on Tom Thumb* resemble Swift's work, for it contains not only, as Dilke remarked, girds at Bentley and Blackmore quite in Swift's manner, but its reference to the Royal Society and its attack on modern criticism are thoroughly in keeping with the *Tale of a Tub*. The "Second corrected edition" of the *Comment* contains very few changes in the text and its chief emendations are that it places in italics its sarcastic allusions to Addison's statements, and introduces a slighting reference to Toland. In every way this pamphlet conforms to Swift's "Vive la bagatelle," it is certainly written in his style; but more important than the question of its authorship is its reflection of the popular opinion of the ballads as a form of doggerel, unworthy of serious consideration.



Following Addison's method the author of the *Comment* justifies his admiration for "Tom Thumb" by showing that it contains thoughts and phrases "agreeable to the Best Greek and Latin poets." The following examples are typical:

The following stanza continues the Miracle and brings the Fairy Queen and her Subjects, who gives him his name, and Makes him a Present of his Apparel

Whereas she clothed him fine and brave,  
In Garments richly fair,  
The which did serve him many years  
In seemly sort to wear.

So Virgil of Queen Dido's Present to Ascanius

Hoc Juvenum egregium praestanti munere donat

and again

Quem candida Dido  
Esse sui dederat Monumentum et pignus Amoris. (P. 10.)

Gainst whom these noble Knights did run  
Sir Chion and the rest,  
But still Tom Thumb with all his might,  
Did bear away the best

Et primum ante omnes victorem appellat Acesten

Which made the courtiers all aghast  
Obstupere animi. (P. 17.)

The text of the *Comment* is written in Swift's vein of irony, for Addison's praise of the ballads is quoted sarcastically, word for word, and the most trivial, wretched lines in "Tom Thumb" are gravely examined for their historical and ethical import. The *Comment* is more than a parody of the ballads, an expression of undisguised contempt for them, it is a sneer at the taste of a man foolish enough to admire them—in other words, Addison was attacked as vigorously as *Chevy Chase* or the *Babes in the Wood*.

On January 8, 1712, appeared the first and second volumes of the first collected edition of the *Spectator*, containing Addison's papers on the ballads. He had revised these papers, and as we have stated, one of the features of his revision was his toning down or qualifying statements, which to the ordinary reader appear quite moderate. Certainly Addison must have read the "Tom Thumb" pamphlet, and Henry Morley notices that the revisions in the ballad papers show that he "flinched a little"

(*The Spectator*, ed. by Henry Morley, 1883, Vol. I, p. 318). This is putting the case somewhat too strongly. He had said that the numbers of *Chevy Chase* were "very sonorous;" he changes this to "sonorous;" he had spoken of the thoughts in the *Babes in the Wood* as "wonderfully natural;" in the revision he omits the adjective "wonderfully." Speaking of this same ballad he had said that its incidents "are such as Virgil himself would have touched upon, had the like story been told by that divine poet," and in the revision he had dropped the reference to Virgil and contented himself with saying that the "incidents are such as are the most proper to excite pity."<sup>1</sup> Considering the many eulogistic phrases he left unaltered, this is hardly to be called flinching. But he went further than this, for in his second paper on *Chevy Chase* he inserted a phrase, which, considering Addison's nature, was more than the retort courteous. Speaking of "Witherington's behaviour" in the ballad, he writes "though I am satisfied your little buffoon readers (who have seen the passage ridiculed in *Hudibras*) will not be able to take the beauty of it: for which reason I dare not so much as quote it." With this characterization of such critics as the author of the *Comment*, Addison leaves his defense of the ballads. Contemptuous ridicule had not shaken in the least his admiration for them and when he turns again from prose to verse composition we feel that the ballads have even affected his style, for we may attribute, in part, to their influence that sincere and deep feeling, that directness of expression which we find in his hymns, but which are lacking in the much-praised *Letter from Italy* and the fortune-bringing *Campaign*.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Comment* uses this phrase with withering sarcasm (p. 5).